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Modern Kitchen and Bath Upgrades

FAMILY FEATURES

Upgrades happen for all kinds of reasons, but one of the most common purposes of a home renovation is to make essential spaces like kitchens and bathrooms more modern.

Modernizing your spaces isn't just about the aesthetic, although that is a major advantage, especially when it comes to resale value. Updating your kitchen and bath is also an opportunity to introduce new technology and enhancements that improve the function of these high-traffic rooms.

Modern styles simplify everyday living and can make contemporary entertaining more enjoyable. The sleek lines of modern design lend themselves to a clean look, which is supported by hidden features that make organization easier.

Smart Technology

Although the idea of a connected home isn't new, technology is steadily improving. This means smart features are now often more affordable, easily integrated into the rest of your home and available to help manage a wider range of household items.

In the kitchen, you can add smart technology in numerous ways, from appliances and climate control to lighting and window treatments. For example, touch-to-open and push-to-open doors and drawers create a sleek, modern design while opening and closing with either a push or touch of a button for convenience.

Similar diversity is available in the bathroom, where you can incorporate connected health and fitness monitors, touchless toilets, mirrors that double as information centers, towel warmers and even showers that automatically adjust to your preferred temperature.

Paint

Changing the colors in a space is one of the most effective ways to transform the decor, but the walls aren't the only place where paint can make a big impact, especially in rooms like the kitchen or bathroom, where the cabinetry can make a bold statement.

Black is a hallmark of modern design and installing cabinetry with a black finish can instantly upgrade a room. To create visual interest, consider incorporating accent cabinets in a coordinating



finish. For example, you could pair Wellborn Cabinet's Midtown wall cabinets finished in Matte Ebony with upper center cabinets finished in Putty Oak. An island in Bel-Air can incorporate both dark and light tones for a cohesive look.

Decorative Range Hoods

An exposed range hood is a trendy look that can add sophistication to your kitchen. Treating this functional element as a statement piece gives you another place to showcase your style and create a sleek and modern look. If your hood is covered, consider making the cabinet door a focal point with a material such as back-painted glass.





Multi-Purpose Sinks

While your sink has some obvious functions, you can upgrade the space for even more practical use. Some of the latest sink design innovations include built-in features such as cutting boards, colanders, bowls, drying racks and compost areas. In addition, motion activated wastebaskets with separate compost or recycling containers provide hands-free access to reduce unwanted messes.

Touchless Faucets

Public restrooms aren't the only places you can benefit from a touchless faucet. At home, the feature may come in handy when your hands are full or filthy. An automatic water flow is convenient and can help keep germs and grime under control. For the most on-trend, modern look, coordinate your faucets with other bathroom elements finished in gold hues, such as a laminate veneer vanity in a high-gloss gold finish.

Cabinetry

Collectively, cabinets are the biggest component of most kitchens. Since kitchens tend to be the hub of the home, it's important to maintain a homey feel while adding the luxury of modern features. Using warm colors, gold-toned hardware and sleek door styles can deliver a glamorous yet welcoming design.

For example, Wellborn Cabinet's Aspire Full Access Frameless line features flat moulding and flush lines to create a thoughtfully integrated flow throughout the kitchen. A Morristown door in the Smokey Walnut finish and Serenity metal doors in Sand Gloss Glass marry heirloom quality and contemporary finishes for a beautiful and functional space.

Free-Standing Tubs

A luxurious soaking tub is a top demand for many homeowners, and trends are moving toward free-standing options that create a focal point in an oasis-like bathroom. You may be envisioning an old-fashioned claw-foot style, but there are numerous modern takes on the traditional version that can fit seamlessly into your modern design scheme.

Wood-Look Flooring

Natural wood floors were once the gold standard, but thanks to improvements in the quality and appearance of laminate and vinyl products, you can find alternative flooring in even high-end homes. Laminate and vinyl planks give the same look as wood (or stone, if you prefer) to complement a modern aesthetic, usually at a lower price point and with greater durability over time. Find more ideas to modernize your living space at wellborn.com.

How to keep gardens safe in summer heat waves

Summer is a season to relax and enjoy the warm weather. Basking in the summer sun is a great way to relax, but only when the temperatures are safe. Summer heat waves can compromise the health of human beings as well as their pets. Gardening enthusiasts also may need to go the extra mile to keep their plants and gardens from wilting under harsh summer sun.

Extreme heat stress can be very harmful to plants. The online gardening resource Gardening Know How notes that some plants can withstand summer heat waves better than others. For example, succulents conserve water in their leaves, helping them to withstand heat waves when the dog days of summer arrive. But succulents are unique, and many plants will require a little extra help to withstand a heat wave.

- **Take a proactive approach with mulch.** Gardeners need not wait until the heat arrives to protect their plants from searing summer heat. The sustainable living experts at Eartheasy recommend utilizing light-colored mulch during heat waves. Such mulch will reflect the sunlight and help to maintain cooler surface soil conditions. Eartheasy even notes that grass clippings, once they've turned from green to light brown, can make for the perfect mulch to protect plants from the heat. Clippings also are free, making them a cost-effective solution.

- **Water wisely.** The horticultural experts at Yates Gardening note that water only helps plants withstand heat waves if it's applied effectively. If water is only applied in short bursts and not long enough so it can penetrate all the way to the root zone, roots will then stay near the surface. In such instances, roots will dry out during a heat wave and plants won't make it through the season. Timing also is essential when watering. Eartheasy recommends watering in the morning to avoid heat scald and also ensure as little water is lost to evaporation as possible. When watering during a heat wave, do so by hand rather than through a sprinkler. Hand watering allows gardeners to direct all of the water onto the plants that need it most during a heat wave.

- **Let your plants pitch in.** When planting new plants, it's important that gardeners recognize it takes time for these plants to establish their roots so they're strong enough to withstand heat waves. In the meantime, strategic planting can help them make it through their first heat waves unscathed. Eartheasy notes that planting by taller, more established plants can provide new plants with shade that can help them survive heat waves. Just make sure new plants can still get the sun they need to thrive.

Heat waves are inevitable and potentially harmful to gardens. Gardeners can help their plants beat the heat in various ways.



Attract More Birds to Your Backyard Basic tips for feeding wild birds

(Family Features) With all the constraints people lived through in 2020, many turned to their own backyards - nature, in particular - for hope, solace, wonder and even entertainment. Despite the worldwide crisis, nature's normalcy remained intact; flowers continued to bloom, bees continued to pollinate and birds continued to fly and forage food.

Feeding birds can be enjoyable for any age group and provide stress relief for all who partake. A University of Exeter study, focused on nature's impact on humans in suburban and urban areas, found lower levels of depression, anxiety and stress were associated with the number of birds people saw during afternoons at home. The benefits of birdwatching come from seeing lots of birds - quantity not "quality" - the study found.

People "felt relaxed and connected to nature when they watched birds in their gardens," researchers said. These feelings increased with the level of bird feeding in the yard. For millions working and schooling from home, this stress reduction was an unintended bonus.

Data from 2020 shows sales of bird feed, feeders, nesting boxes and bird houses

spiked as interest in backyard birds soared while people spent more time at home.

Interest in birding isn't slowing down. If you haven't tried attracting birds to your backyard, now is a perfect opportunity to start. The experts at Cole's Wild Bird Products Co. offer these bird feed and feeder basics to attract more birds to your backyard.

Feeders

A variety of bird feeder types placed at different heights attract more birds than one feeder featuring one seed type. Start with two feeder types that accommodate most feed options. Bowl feeders serve not only seeds but also dried mealworms, fruit and suet. An option like Cole's Bountiful Bowl Feeder comes with an adjustable dome cover you can raise or lower to prevent larger birds and squirrels from getting to food and protect it from rain.

Traditional tube feeders are all-purpose options for bird feeding, especially for small birds that cling. For example, the Terrific Tube Feeder is made with state-of-the-art materials to prevent warping and discoloration and includes a quick-clean, removable base to make cleaning fast and easy. Just push a button and the bottom of



the feeder pops off for easy access to the inside. Rinse the feeder with soapy water, dunk it into a water-bleach solution at a concentration of 9-to-1, rinse, dry and reattach the bottom. Regular cleaning of feeders is essential for preventing mold, germs and disease.

Popular Foods

Birdseed: Not all birdseed is created equal. Look for quality blends without cheap filler like red millet and oats. All-natural seed containing no chemicals or mineral oil is safe and more appealing to birds. Top seed picks include all-natural black oil sunflower and Cole's "Hot Meats" (sunflower meats infused with habanero

chili peppers that birds love and squirrels dislike). Or an option like Special Feeder blend, packed with favorites including black oil sunflower, sunflower meats and pecans, attracts the greatest number of wild birds. Offering a wide variety, Cole's feed is researched and specifically formulated to attract certain bird species, the largest number of birds and the greatest variety of birds.

Insects and Worms: A healthy, lush lawn is one of the best ways to feed birds that prefer insects and worms. You can supplement birds' diets by serving dried mealworms in a packaged variety that's easier to feed and less messy than live mealworms. Mealworms are packed with energy and contain essential nutrients, fat and protein.

Fresh Fruit: Apples, orange halves and bananas are favored fruits.

Suet: Perfect for insect-eating birds, suet is a high-fat food that provides abundant calories, rich nutrition and is a high-energy treat.

Using the right feeders and high-quality feed can enhance your backyard and entice more birds. For more information on attracting birds to your backyard, visit coleswildbird.com.

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